

***Abstract of the Invention***

A method for selecting an optimal balance between direct cost and a number of suppliers, including soliciting bids from a plurality of suppliers for a plurality of lots, receiving at least one bid from a supplier for each lot, storing the bids from each supplier in a database, and generating at least a first and second optimal solution from the bids in the database, the first optimal solution having a different number of suppliers than the second optimal solution.

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